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Remarks

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D/ Executive Secretary

20 June 84

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Executive Registry
84-2560/9

19 June 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Intelligence

FROM: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Aaron Levenstein

1. The attached is on the subject of the use which the other side makes of words and concepts in damaging our reputation and diminishing our policies. Aaron Levenstein is a very knowledgeable social democrat who has been following communist propaganda for over forty years. If you think he would be helpful in formulating the project you and I talked about, I think he would be available for consultation.

2. Also attached is a paper I asked Pat Moynihan, who has pronounced on the subject, to give me. I'd like to talk about how we might address this subject which everybody seems to think is as important as it is elusive.

William J. Casey

(b)(3)

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The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

Executive Registry
84-2560/8

19 June 1984

Dear Aaron,

I very much appreciate your prompt and thoughtful response to my request that you search your mind to identify the foremost practitioners of psychological warfare of the late 1940s and early 1950s. You made a good haul and I appreciate it.

As you say, it is a very important subject and certainly the use of these skills damages our position in the world. I have not yet figured out how to go about assessing what we face in this area. Your suggestions are good ones and I will keep in touch with you on this.

Best regards.

Yours,

William J. Casey

Mr. Aaron Levenstein
3083 Uncas Street
Mohegan Lake, New York 10547

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Executive Registry
84- 2560/7

AARON LEVENSTEIN

3083 UNCAS STREET
MOHEGAN LAKE, NY 10547

June 16, 1984

Mr. William J. Casey, Director
Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, D.C. 20505

Dear Bill:

Your letter and the enclosures arrived while I was away, and I'm hastening to reply because I believe the subject matter is of top importance. It's my firm conviction, as I have said to Leo on many occasions, that if we can't resolve the problem of propaganda -- conscious and unconscious -- in this age of mass communications, democracy will not be able to survive. The basic premise of a free society is that, in the long run, the people will reach the right decisions and select the right leadership if they have access to truthful information. Democracy will die if the current wave of "semantic pollution" cannot be conquered.

The basic point was elaborated by none other than George Orwell in his famous essay, "Politics and the English Language," that begins:

> Most people who bother with the matter at all would admit that the English language is in a bad way, but it is generally assumed that we cannot by conscious action do anything about it. Our civilization is decadent and our language -- so the argument runs -- must inevitably share in the general collapse....
>
> Now, it is clear that the decline of a language must ultimately have political and economic causes: it is not due simply to the bad influence of this or that individual writer. But an effect can become a cause, reinforcing the original cause and producing the same effect in an intensified form, and so on indefinitely....
>
> The point is that the process is reversible. Modern English, especially written English, is full of bad habits which spread by imitation and which can be avoided if one is willing to take the necessary trouble. If one gets rid of these habits one can think more clearly, and to think clearly is a necessary first step toward political regeneration.... (George Orwell, A Collection of Essays, A Doubleday Anchor Book, New York 1954, pp. 162-3)

This is quite clearly your purpose in raising the issue, and I think its accomplishment is a prerequisite if democracy is to prevail over totalitarianism.

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Your recollections are quite right. Back in the 1930s, there was a group of sociologists at Columbia University, led by Harold Lasswell and Paul Lazarsfeld, who were concerned with propaganda analysis. They focussed particularly on the relatively new phenomenon, radio. Another important figure was Leonard Doob, who brought out a book in 1935 entitled Propaganda, Its Psychology and Technique. Much of this material was inspired by the need to resist the vast propaganda drive that Hitler had let loose. A major center in the counter-campaign was the Institute for Propaganda Analysis, led by a former journalist whose name, if memory serves me, was Clyde Miller. It was he and his group who described the basic Hitler techniques in terms that eventually became part of the current idiom -- for example:

"The Big Lie" -- Hitler had said, "The bigger the lie, the more readily it will be believed."

"The stereotype" -- this was applied particularly in the Nazi campaign against the Jews.

"The glittering generality" -- reference to abstractions that had no operational meaning, like Volk (peoplehood), Racial Purity, etc.

Resistance to the present propaganda wave will require the development and acceptance of a vocabulary that accurately identifies present-day techniques.

In the years immediately following World War II a good deal was done by men like Kurt Lewin, the founder of Group Dynamics. He demonstrated, for example, how people are converted to movements like Communism. The propagandists do not expound the philosophy of the movement -- most new recruits are told nothing about the complex theories of historical materialism, class struggle, surplus value, the dialectic, that Marx wrote about. Instead the technique is to create a general attitude, perhaps on a single immediate issue, while surrounding the individual by a group pressure or an atmosphere. Then a point is reached where the target, without having made a deliberate decision, considers himself one of the group. The religious cults are now using the same approach. Lewin develops this in one of the essays in Resolving Social Conflicts; I can't give you a more specific citation because I have misplaced my copy. (Also worth reviewing is Carl I. Hovland's research on what happened during the war effort in the U.S. and how attitudes in the Army were shaped.)

Some of the above is summed up in passing in a major volume, a thousand-page tome, edited by Ithiel de Sola Pool and William Schramm (Rand McNally College Publishing Company), entitled Handbook of Communication. (Pool, then at M.I.T., died recently; he had come out of the same social democratic background as I, and was firmly anti-Communist; in recent years he identified with

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the neo-conservatives. Schramm is, unless he has retired, at Stanford University.)

The current techniques of propaganda manipulation that we have to overcome are adaptations of the methods used by anti-democratic forces in the 1930s. They have taken a new form, however, because of the nature of contemporary printed and electronic media. For instance, the "Big Lie" Technique has been replaced by the "Bigger Truth" Technique. I recall a review in the New York Times Book Review of Braestrup's book on the Tet Campaign that Freedom House brought out. The reviewer, admitting that the press had misrepresented the facts, as Braestrup demonstrated, took the position that the press was right in doing so because the reporters were serving "a greater truth" -- namely, that the U.S. had no right to be in Vietnam.

One important change that has occurred in the techniques of propaganda in the 1980s, as compared with the 1930s, is the result of the very success of those techniques in throwing a blanket of cynicism over the minds of the public. The skepticism has not only touched "the Establishment"; it has jarred the media themselves. The press, for instance, complains about the enormous verdicts that juries are rendering in libel suits; in the overwhelming majority of the cases, the higher courts reverse the juries because of Sullivan v. New York Times, or reduce the damages substantially. So far as I know, nobody in the media has done sufficient self-examination to ask why the public, speaking through the jury system, is so scornful of the media's honesty. Once they have set off the fires of mistrust, their own house can't escape the conflagration. Unfortunately, even if one distrusts or hates the brainwasher, the constant exposure leaves the mind infected with the falsehoods.

Because the media have abandoned the traditional standard of objectivity, they use language not to convey data but to convey an attitude towards the data. No statistics about the actual number of accidents in nuclear power plants can have any effect if the data come into conflict with an attitude. Jacques Ellul, the French sociologist and philosopher, points out that propaganda aims at conditioning people's reflexes:

> Propaganda tries first of all to create conditioned reflexes in the individual by training him so that certain words, signs or symbols, even certain persons or acts, provoke unfailing reactions. Despite many protests from psychologists, creating such conditioned reflexes, collectively as well as individually, is definitely possible. (Jacques Ellul, Propaganda -- the Formation of Men's Attitudes, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1965, p. 31)

Ellul calls attention not only to conditioned reactions to words but includes also signs or symbols. That is why general semantics, as a study, has been broadened into the field of

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semiotics, which includes the examination of all three. That symbols are important is evidenced by the consistent campaign to de-legitimize the nation's historic symbols through acts like burning the flag, refusing to stand during the singing of the national anthem, disrupting judicial proceedings, defiling religious symbols (example: the overt offensiveness with which the Star of David is used by political cartoonists in the Soviet Union). I think the Administration's insistence on orderly questioning during White House press conferences, instead of simultaneous shouting by the reporters, has had a salutary effect on TV viewers; so too the disciplinary response against Chris Wallace (I think it was he) at the London summit when he insisted on shouting a question in violation of the rule that there were to be no questions during a picture-taking session.

It may be useful here to review briefly the propaganda techniques that past studies have described and to note modifications that have since occurred:

1. Stereotypes. The contemporary version is largely derivative from the portraits presented on the TV screen: the businessman is invariably corrupt, power-hungry, lascivious (see Dallas); the teacher is scared, ineffectual, discontented (is this why young people are turning their backs on such a career?); the scientist is callous about the consequences of his research; etc., etc.

2. Epithets. Invective is an old method, but the terminology changes. A recent example is the reference to "Hymies" for Jews and "Hymietown" for New York. Applying a tag that carries negative connotations is a practise made more deadly by the enormous reach of the media. "Squeal law" became the media's term of identification for a regulation that would require parents to be notified that their children are receiving birth control information from publicly supported agencies; the appellation made objective examination of a debatable proposition virtually impossible.

3. Selectivity. "The propagandist, out of a mass of complex facts, selects only those that are suitable for his purpose," says one analyst. This phenomenon grows more serious as the problems of society grow more complex. Because our media emphasize the current, they fail to inform their readers and viewers on the historical background. Can the Russian role in Poland today be understood without knowledge of the betrayal and execution of the leaders of the Polish government in exile who went back from London to negotiate with the Russians on the basis of the Yalta pledge of free elections? Certainly, limitations of space and time require selectivity, but if the standard for selection is which facts will serve to advance a predetermined point of view, democracy must fall victim to misinformation. Even if the individual facts presented are true, falsification occurs if they are placed in a false context or if they are so stacked that they result in a totally wrong impression.

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4. The veil of verbiage. Truth can be conceded and dismissed through the device of overwhelming the reader or hearer with a mass of words. Orwell gives this illustration:

> Consider for instance some comfortable English professor defending Russian totalitarianism. He cannot say outright, "I believe in killing off your opponents when you can get good results by doing so." Probably, therefore, he will say something like this:
>
> "While freely conceding that the Soviet regime exhibits certain features which the humanitarian may be inclined to deplore, we must, I think, agree that a certain curtailment of the right to political opposition is an unavoidable concomitant of transitional periods, and that the rigors which the Russian people have been called upon to undergo have been amply justified in the sphere of concrete achievement." (Op. cit., p. 173)

5. Bold assertiveness. This is part of the technique of the Big Lie. Truth is whatever the propagandist says it is. A recent example is the following from a front-page article by R. W. Apple, Jr., in the New York Times, March 19, 1984, headed "Greece Under Papandreou: Leftist but in Western Camp":

> Over recent months Ethnos [Greek newspaper that has won a libel suit against a reporter who called it an agent of the USSR] has been arguing that the vision of George Orwell in "Nineteen Eighty-Four" was of the future of the West, and particularly the United States, and not of the Soviet Union.

6. Repetition and sloganeering. Propagandists rely on a pile-driver repetition of particular phrases to lead to ultimate acceptance. Soviet speeches at the UN are a monotonous spewing forth of the same phrases to describe the same arguments endlessly. Is there something cultural about the resistance of the West to repeating itself in the same words? The Russians catch onto a phrase, say the phoney linkage "Americans-Zionists," and bring it into play like a reflex action. Or consider the psychology of such sloganizing as "Better red than dead." Is it true because it rhymes, whereas "Better communist than dead" would be false because it does not? Would the West be winning the argument if it had come forward with "Better dead than red"? Or what about "Neither red nor dead" which is the intelligent policy of deterrence?

7. Scapegoating. Hitler used the Jews as a device to rally his followers, while he was preparing his attack on the real adversaries, those he later called the "pluto-democracies." At the UN, the Russians have picked up the Arab target, Israel, for the same purpose, but behind the attacks on Israel is the real target, the U.S. Indeed, the Russians who were among the

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first at the UN to approve the creation of the state of Israel (expecting it to become an ally if not a satellite) now denounce it as a "tool of the U.S. in the Middle East," acting as an agent of American imperialism even when the U.S. publicly expresses its opposition to a given Israeli policy.

8. Misrepresentation by extension. This technique involves pushing an adversary's argument beyond the true boundaries of his words and his intent. By rewording or by misinterpreting his statement, it becomes possible to attribute to him views he never held and thus to render him vulnerable to attack. This technique often restates a proposition in words that add connotations, associations or emotional content that the author never intended and, indeed, may flatly oppose. Two recent examples of misrepresentation by extension:

a. The New York Daily News in a front-page headline declared that President Ford, responding to an appeal for financial aid from New York City, had said: "Drop dead!" (It has become increasingly the practice for journalists, particularly on radio and TV, to rephrase what public figures have said and to present it in such a way that the public believes those were the words spoken. This is frequently done by interviewers who try to force the interviewee to accept their wording of the proposition.)

b. The New York Times was responsible for a shocking misrepresentation of a statement made by Archbishop O'Connor, given in reply to a question asked in an interview. He had compared abortions with the deaths in the Holocaust. The Times used some of his impromptu language to accuse him of holding the view that the Jews had been a "problem" in Germany during the Hitler period. This despite O'Connor's well known position on the persecution of the Jews.

9. Guilt by association. This is a familiar technique, but the opposite side of the same coin is innocence by association. Thus, it is argued that Alger Hiss must have been innocent because targets of Senator McCarthy were innocent; or that Hiss must have been innocent because one of his accusers was Richard Nixon. A curious example is the case of New York City's Schools Chancellor who was charged with financial improprieties unrelated to any political issue. He defended himself, according to the New York Times (March 27, 1984), in a well received speech at City College: "... the 41-year-old Chancellor compared his plight to that of educators who were silenced during the cold war and pledged to state his case loudly and repeatedly."

10. Sotto voce communication. I use this term to describe a practise that is more subtle than the Russian "Everybody knows...." technique. (Prof. Morris Raphael Cohen used to say to us when we used such a phrase: "I don't care if everybody knows; I want to know how you know.") The sotto voce technique puts crucial issues in subordinate clauses or parenthetical phrases, as if they are generally agreed upon and no

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longer at issue. Or the subordinate clause may seem to be describing a sinister fact which, if it were stated in a direct sentence would not at all appear to be sinister. Here is a recent example from the New York Times (April 15, 1984), reporting that the Israel army had announced that it had destroyed the homes of certain terrorists: "The army, which did not explain why it waited 24 hours to announce the demolitions, said the houses were bulldozed in the villages of...."

Tom Wicker in the New York Times is a master of the interpolated comment. For example, writing of John Glenn, he says: "This is a serious disability -- and a peculiarly American failing -- for a man, etc., etc." It's the parenthetical interpolations, reiterated often enough, that create an attitude based on no substantive examination since it is treated as a foregone conclusion or an already established fact for which no proof is needed.

11. The distorting lens. The problems that exist in the print media are even more serious in the visual media. The polls show that Americans rely more on TV and radio for their news than on the press. McLuhan's statement that "the medium is the message" once seemed outlandish, but has proved to be the reality. TV is oriented to the visual; what cannot be seen is therefore given less attention by the medium. Yet the unseen may be more important than the seen. The poverty of a black family is easily photographed and will get more time than the tedious process of improving a Chrysler assembly line, though the latter has more relevance for the poverty problem. Thus, the medium is the message, but the message is a distorted picture of our society. The printed media then follow suit because they must remain competitive, and further distortion takes place.

In bygone times, the glory of our freedom of the press was that it produced a diversity of reporting. One could find a clash of opinions and perspectives by reading the New York Times and the Herald-Tribune. Today one cannot differentiate the treatment of news from one network to another; in basic approach, the New York Times and the Washington Post follow the same premises. The purpose of the First Amendment -- to guarantee that a variety of voices would be heard -- is not being fulfilled.

This is not due to any conspiracy on the part of the media to formulate one single view of the world and to impose it on the public. The uniformity is due to the fact that the news output is forced through the same McLuhanesque mold. Sydney H. Schanberg, the New York Times columnist, recently introduced his commentary on a Democratic Party primary debate with a reference to the fact that "as usual, the think-alike press corps missed the big issue." (March 13, 1984) They think alike because the medium writes their message.

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Recently, the New York Times noted that an important speech by Walter Mondale at Emory University got little coverage on the electronic media; "the national networks either ignored it or used only a scant portion of it." The reason: "the former Vice President's phrases tend to be too long, making speeches difficult to cut into for the nightly news." (March 11, 1984) Some time thereafter, the Times carried a story (March 26, 1984) to the effect that Mr. Mondale's media consultant, Raymond Strother, said that he usually sends his clients for training to a video studio. The Times quotes him as follows:

> "And in that studio, we teach the candidate how to stand, how to address the camera, how to address a reporter's question," Mr. Strother said. The point, given the tightness of television time, is for him to be able to answer any question in 30 to 40 seconds.

Can democracy work if the market place of ideas, including electoral decisions, is to be stocked with 30-to-40 second intellectual wares?

* * * * *

Already this letter is far too long, and I know your reading burden is enormous. I would have liked to discuss also the political and social significance of the socalled "docu-drama," through which the TV audience is being taught recent American history -- for instance, the Alger Hiss case, the Oppenheimer story, etc. But let me conclude this over-lengthy response to your question with these additional observations and some bare-bones recommendations:

Of course we must not interfere with the great tradition embodied in the First Amendment. But that very amendment is based on the premise that the health of the Republic requires that there be competition in the marketplace of ideas. If we have reached a point where there is only uniformity of opinion in the marketplace -- not by virtue of conspiracy, I repeat, but inherent in the very mechanisms of mass communication -- then those who believe in preserving America's tradition of pluralism must undertake new initiatives. At the very least these would require:

1. convening some of the people who participated in the efforts to inoculate Americans against the Nazi propaganda during the 1930s and the War -- semanticists like Hayakawa if they are available and sociologists like Seymour Martin Lipset, Nathan Glazer, and others they could suggest, with a view to providing --

2. a thorough analysis of what is happening in our mass communications system, and

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3. the creation of a new Institute for Propaganda Analysis, which like its predecessor would be conducted by private citizens and would function in the interests of American democracy and without partisan bias.

Such a beginning, I believe, could lead to the development of a program that would strengthen the American ideal -- diversity of discussion, civility of discourse, and consistency of national purpose.

Thank you, Bill, for asking me for my views. It brought back many memories of our association in the hectic 1940s.

Sincerely,

Aaron

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Words and Foreign Policy

DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN

Years ago Disraeli, in one of the novels, remarked that "Few ideas are correct ones, and none can ascertain which they are. But it is with words we govern men." There can be no doubt that words are important in government and they are especially so in the delicate arena of foreign policy negotiations. It is for this reason that I have recently been troubled by what appears to me to be the undisciplined use of language with which American spokesmen and principal officers of the government have addressed themselves to certain foreign policy problems.

In particular, I am concerned about the phenomenon dealt with so brilliantly by George Orwell in his classic essay, "Politics and the English Language." More specifically I should like to briefly call to the attention of our diplomats a more recent and, I think, important point made by Dr. Fred Charles Ikle (formerly a professor of political science at MIT and lately director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency).

Some years ago, in a paper on American difficulties in negotiating with communist countries (published by the Rand Corporation), he pointed to the process whereby we come to adopt the language of our adversaries in describing political reality. He gave to this process the intriguing term "semantic infiltration."

I quote a passage from the paper he wrote on the matter. He said:

> Paradoxically, despite the fact that the State Department and other government agencies bestow so much care on the vast verbal output of Communist governments, we have been careless in adopting the language of our opponents and their definitions of conflict issues in many cases where this was clearly to our disadvantage. Or perhaps this is not so paradoxical. It might be precisely because our officials spend so much time on the opponents' rhetoric that they eventually use his words – first in quotation marks, later without.

These are concepts which are at the heart of today's major political conflicts. For years now, the most brutal totalitarian regimes in the world have called themselves "people's demo-

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cracies" or "democratic republics."

The term "people's democracies," according to Milovan Djilas, was coined by Stalin himself and given as part of the title of the new publication that attended the formation of the Cominform in 1947. Stalin wanted us constantly repeating the fact that the Cominform journal for "A People's Democracy" said such and such. Similarly, organizations in various parts of the world which seek to emulate and institute that manner of regime have taken to calling themselves "liberation movements."

"Semantic Infiltration" at State

Now here is the problem we face today.

For some time, the Secretary of State, who is a distinguished and capable American statesman, in referring to the parties to the dispute in Rhodesia, has spoken of "the Patriotic Front," on the one hand, and "the Salisbury group," on the other. Now, "the Patriotic Front" is made up of forces supplied by and backed by the totalitarian powers, the Soviet Union and China. The self-styled "Patriotic Front" represents the armed component of totalitarianism, a philosophy which they openly espouse.

However, who would not wish to be with "the Patriotic Front?" Is there a man whose heart is not stirred by the prospect of joining with the Patriots? Who, by contrast, would wish to be with "the Salisbury group"? It sounds like a mining concession put together by investment bankers in London.

Let me cite another example. On July 17, in a State Department briefing, the spokesman for the Department of State made the following statement:

> There cannot be a peaceful settlement unless the liberation forces and the Salisbury parties are satisfied. What we are seeking is an agreement by all parties to fair elections under neutral transition arrangements.

By using the words "liberation forces" the Department of State spokesman is referring to the guerrillas who are armed by the Soviet Union and China and who certainly espouse a totalitarian doctrine. The Department of State spokesman went on to say that we want "fair elections under neutral transition arrangements."

I would argue that the use of those terms, the choice of those words, is fatal to the object of neutrality. When you have described one side as the liberation forces and the other side as a group in the capital, you have summoned all the imagery of political legitimacy of the 20th century and put it on the one side and denied it to another. That is not only fatal to neutrality but, I suggest, it is fatal to clear thinking about this phenomenon.

The Need to Describe our Adversaries Accurately

I do not believe this is a trivial matter. For some years, I have been arguing that the West's political culture is endangered by the fact that the vocabulary and the symbols of political progress are being expropriated by the opponents of our values. Democracy, as we understand it, is under assault from totalitarians masquerading as democrats – just as democratic socialism is under assault from totalitarians masquerading as socialists in Eastern Europe. Nonetheless, we persist in dignifying these enemies of freedom with the terminology of freedom – so that we persistently misdescribe the political forces arrayed against us.

It is thus important that we convey the impression to the world that we understand the difference between national liberation on the one hand, and the progressive brutalization of politics which is being carried on by the Soviets in the name of national liberation.

If I could use a term of nautical imagery, I would like to suggest that at the very least the Department of State's acceptance of this language is unseamanlike. It is prejudicial to good order and to semantic discipline. It reveals a carelessness that verges on negligence or, alternatively, it reveals a private agenda that needs to be further explored in public.

In summation, I believe we need not be ashamed to express our proprietary interest in the notions of self-determination and representative government. And it is essential to our own well-being in the world that other nations not be permitted to distort these concepts into a shape which would exclude our own democracy from the proper definition.

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19 June 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Intelligence

FROM: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Aaron Levenstein

1. The attached is on the subject of the use which the other side makes of words and concepts in damaging our reputation and diminishing our policies. Aaron Levenstein is a very knowledgeable social democrat who has been following communist propaganda for over forty years. If you think he would be helpful in formulating the project you and I talked about, I think he would be available for consultation.

2. Also attached is a paper I asked Pat Moynihan, who has pronounced on the subject, to give me. I'd like to talk about how we might address this subject which everybody seems to think is as important as it is elusive.

William J. Casey

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